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Indiana State Department of Health

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NEW PROGRAM TO TEACH HEALTHY HABITS IN INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

INDIANAPOLIS—The Indiana State Department of Health today announced the launch of the INSight Youth Corps (Indiana's Network of Students Inspiring Good Health Today). This statewide network of high school students will be trained to serve as mentors and leaders in their schools and communities to promote and teach healthy behaviors. The INSight Youth Corps is a student-led initiative developed out of INShape Indiana, Governor Mitch Daniels' statewide health initiative to promote better nutrition, increase physical activity, and smoking cessation.

"INSight couldn't have come at a better time," said State Health Commissioner, Judith A. Monroe, M.D. "Our young people have the power and opportunity to serve as role models for healthy behavior. Indiana youth are improving in some areas of risky behavior, but we still have room for improvement."

The Department of Health is working with the Indiana Area Health Education Centers in recruiting Indiana high schools to establish INSight Youth Corps in several school systems. Each INSight Youth Corps will deliver health education within their school system, as well as design and carry out various creative health-related projects.

"Learning to practice a healthy lifestyle is just like any other habit," said Katherine Newland, Director of the Coordinated School Health Program. "We can learn healthy habits when we're young and hopefully practice them through our lifetimes. The INSight Youth Corps was designed to help teach these healthy habits to Indiana's young people, so they can be healthy role models for their families and communities."

All INSight Youth Corps members will receive training on public speaking, developing educational programs, and leadership and teamwork skills. The members will then educate their peers, younger students, and members of the community on important health issues, including, but not limited to, INShape Indiana's core message of increased physical activity, good nutrition, and tobacco prevention.

According to the latest findings from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), released on June 8th from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Indiana high school students outperform the national average in several areas, including:

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- 3.8 percent of Indiana's female youth said they rarely or never wear a seat belt when riding in a car, compared to 7.8 percent nationally;
- 24.6 percent of Indiana high school students report riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times during the past 30 days, versus 28.5 percent nationally;
- 29.3 percent of Indiana youth report being in a physical fight during the past 12 months, compared to 35.9 percent nationally;
- 21.8 percent of Indiana teens said they drank alcohol before age 13, versus 25.6 percent nationally;
- 31.9 percent of Indiana youth report watching three or more hours of television every day, compared to 37.2 nationally.
- 93.5 percent of Indiana teens report being taught about AIDS and HIV infection in school, versus 87.9 nationally.

However Indiana teens fare poorly compared to the national average in other areas:

- 92.3 percent of Indiana teens report rarely or never wearing a bicycle helmet, versus 83.4 percent nationally;
- 18.2 percent of Indiana high school students report purchasing cigarettes at a store or gas station, compared to 15.2 nationally;
- 15.5 percent of Indiana youth eat five or more fruits and vegetable servings per day, compared to 20.1 nationally;
- 20.5 percent of Indiana's male high school students are overweight, versus 16.0 nationally;
- 38.7 percent of Indiana youth are enrolled in a physical education class, compared to 54.2 nationally.
- 13.5 percent of Indiana's female high school students report dating violence, versus 9.3 nationally.

Indiana is nearly on par with the national average in many areas, including condom use during last sexual intercourse (62.6 vs. 62.8 respectively). However when broken down by gender Indiana females report higher rates of condom use than the national average (62.6 vs. 55.9 respectively) while males report lower rates (62.6 vs. 70.0 respectively).

"This confirms why we need initiatives like the INSight Youth Corps and INShape Indiana," said Judith Ganser, M.D., Director of Maternal and Child Health. "The INSight Youth Corps is a great opportunity for schools to encourage healthy behaviors, and to allow students to develop skills and serve as healthy role models."

Additional programs are already in place to address health risk behaviors among Indiana youth, including Indiana RESPECT, an adolescent pregnancy prevention initiative, and Voice, an Indiana youth movement fighting back against tobacco.

For more information on starting an INSight Youth Corps in your school, contact Katherine Newland at (317) 234-3395 or log on to the INShape Indiana Web site at www.INShape.IN.gov.